

Last week President Clinton moved us another step forward in our continuing effort to improve our Nation's child support enforcement system. I want to commend him on taking such a bold step in issuing an Executive order which will improve and expedite child support enforcement for Federal employees.

The Executive order will cross-match the names of Federal employees with Federal employment records and inform the States if there is a match. A determination will be made by the State as to whether wage withholding or other actions are necessary. The order will simplify service of process for Federal employees.

In addition, it will require every Federal agency to cooperate with the Federal parent locator service. The Executive order also cuts the time in half between the day a paycheck is garnished and the day it is received by the custodial parent.

Now, almost every Member of this body knows and my constituents know that I am a strong supporter of Federal employees and fight for their pay and benefits. But they, like others, need to be responsible. And they need to support their children.

The President has established a working model upon which the Congress can build. In the next couple of weeks I hope this House will bring a bill to the floor which contains meaningful reform to the current system.

The previous speaker talked about welfare reform and a couple of others did as well. There is not a person in this body that does not know that welfare is broke. And the issue is, how do we fix it? How do we fix it, and, yes, expect and demand work, but also understand that to get to work, we are going to have to take actions to facilitate that transfer from dependency to independence.

Before we reach the floor for the final vote, there is still ground which can be covered such as revocation of driver's licenses for persons owing child support arrearages. While I applaud my colleagues for including child support in their welfare reform package, I am disappointed that they chose to not include this provision. The inclusion of such a provision would have the effect of again holding parents responsible for support of their children.

The State of Maine has instituted such a plan. Since implementation, the State has revoked less than 20 licenses, but because of the threat of license revocation, the State has received about 12 million additional dollars for back child support.

Just imagine how much could be collected and used to support our Nation's children if this were implemented in all 50 states.

Mr. Speaker, we all agree the child support system is in need of reform. Let us take actions in the coming weeks to make sure that children receive the support from their parents that they are due morally and legally.

PUNITIVE DAMAGES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Tennessee [Mr. BRYANT] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BRYANT of Tennessee. Mr. Speaker, punitive damages have clearly gotten out of hand. Tonight, I want to share with you a case involving punitive damages in my home State of Tennessee.

Sadly, it involved the death of an individual from Alabama by carbon monoxide poisoning.

The plaintiff claimed that the carbon monoxide poisoning was caused by a natural gas water heater made in Tennessee. It was a used heater obtained by a homeowner and installed by someone with no plumbing background. It was installed behind a wall without combustion air, with no vent, and was connected to an LP gas line. The local gas company wasn't notified, and that was a violation of local law.

In short, the heater was altered from its original manufactured condition and was installed improperly and illegally. Nevertheless, a jury verdict was rendered against State industries. The jury awarded \$5.5 million in compensatory damages and \$6.5 in punitive damages. In fact, one of the jurors wanted to give \$25 million.

On appeal, the Alabama Supreme Court reduced the compensatory damages to \$850,000, but the punitive damages stood.

Now I am not criticizing in any way, shape, or form the person who installed the heater. In his mind's eye, he was lending a helping hand. And I am truly sorry for the death of anyone. But what I am criticizing is the award the jury made.

Punitive damages are intended to punish—not to redistribute wealth. Compensatory damages are designed to compensate for medical costs, lost wages, pain and suffering, and emotional distress. Punitive damages are intended to punish—to send a message that whatever was done wrong, don't do it again.

Had the legislation before us tonight been in place, the plaintiff still could have received almost \$3.5 million. That's a substantial amount of money which would have served to both compensate the plaintiff for their suffering and punish the defendant for whatever wrong they may have done.

This legislation will not impede upon anyone's right to sue, despite the many fallacious and misleading charges by its opponents.

I would support no legislation that would close the courthouse doors to anyone. Access to the courts is a fundamental right that must be acknowledged. But as a lawyer, I can tell you we must have tort reform, and we must have it now.

It's time we establish common sense and reason in our judicial system, and this legislation does just that. Many States have already placed caps on punitive damage awards.

It's time the Federal Government followed their lead, and passed tort reform legislation.

A CHALLENGE TO THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY: GIVE US YOUR SPENDING CUTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. LONGLEY). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. KINGSTON] is recognized for 5 minutes.

□ 2145

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, the balanced budget amendment is not truly dead, but it is in the hospice care unit across the hall. In the House about 130 Democrats voted against it, 2 Republicans. In the Senate, 33 Democrats and 1 Republican voted against it, so apparently, I know the Democrats had some heartburn with the concept of a balanced budget amendment.

One of the big reasons that they gave, particularly in the Senate, was monkeying with the Constitution. Apparently, not monkeying with the Constitution is more important than not letting the country go bankrupt. Obviously, interpretation of the Constitution and its sacredness is relative to proximity to reelection.

I would say that so many times, if you watch the Senators speaking, they flip-flop back and forth more than an old Patsy Cline record on the jukebox.

First, they said, the Constitution: "I'm not going to vote for a balanced budget amendment because of the Constitution." Then, they said "Give us your specifics, Republicans. You want to balance the budget by the year 2002, give us the specifics."

Last week, the Committee on Appropriations gave \$17 billion in specific cuts, very difficult cuts, heart-wrenching in many cases, painful, many times politically risky, politically unwise. Members had programs in their own districts that were reduced, at a time when there is a lot of screaming and crying back home to keep these programs.

What the Republican Party has had to do is say "Look, we are on a sinking boat. We are asking everybody to throw out a little bit of your own luggage, but we think if you do that, we can get the boat ashore. We can guarantee you if you won't let go of your luggage, we are going down."

At a \$4.5 trillion debt, and an item on our budget called interest on the national debt, which is the third largest expenditure in the national budget, \$20 billion a month, we are going bankrupt.

Yet, Mr. Chairman, we hear time and time again, as we did earlier tonight from the gentleman from Missouri, "We are not doing things for the children." Back home, Mr. Speaker, it reminds me of when I was a kid. My daddy had a charge account at a pharmacy.

I found out when I was about 10 years old I could go down there and get myself a 25-cent Coke and charge it to my dad, just write his signature, and I didn't have to reach in old Jack's pocket, because I just had to sign my dad's name.

Then at the end of the month my dad would see a 25-cent charge for Coca-Colas and he would have some stern words for me, but he would also get his 25 cents back.

We have got an opposite case going on in the U.S. Congress, particularly on the Democrat side, particularly on those who will not give it a rest on the school lunch program. They would prefer misinterpretation of reality to reality.

Mr. Speaker, what they are saying is "Go ahead and charge it, not to your dad, charge it to your son and your grandson and your daughter and your granddaughter. Years from now, when your children's children come to pay the bill, you will be dead and you will not have to worry about their debt."

That is what we are doing. We talk about doing things for children. How about not saddling them when they get out of school, when they get out into the work world, how about not saddling them right off the bat with a huge, tremendous debt? That is what we are doing.

It is kind of like saying, you know, people want ice cream for today. It might not be in their best interests to eat ice cream three meals a day. Let us kind of cut back a little bit, and maybe there will be enough tomorrow, but we have to take some meat and vegetables now. It is very important to do it.

We had \$17 billion in specific cuts. To my knowledge, not one Democrat voted for any of them. They grandstanded about how harsh all of them were. I understand that, that is fair game. I would say the Republican Party has done it to the Democrats many times themselves.

However, the fact is we are taking away one of their arguments for voting against the balanced budget amendment, Mr. Speaker. We are giving specific cuts.

Now, in the spirit of good sportsmanship, in the spirit of preservation of America, in the spirit of the best interests of the taxpayers, I challenge the Democrat party, give us your cuts. You do not like ours. That does not change the fact that we have a \$4.5 trillion debt. That does not change the fact that we are paying \$20 billion a month in interest. That does not change the fact that the third largest expenditure on our national budget each year is interest. So give us your specifics. We need to hear from you.

I think if the Democrat Party would go ahead and decide to jump in the water with us, that maybe we could take the best of their ideas with the best of the Republican ideas and do what is best for the United States of America, so that our children and our children's children will not be saddled

with such a huge and tremendous debt and a bankrupt nation.

THE TRUE REPUBLICAN PROPOSALS FOR SPENDING ON THE SCHOOL LUNCH PROGRAM AND ON WIC

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Arizona [Mr. HAYWORTH] is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HAYWORTH. Mr. Speaker, I would associate myself fully with the remarks made by my good friend, the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. KINGSTON], and for that matter, I listened with great interest to my good friend, the gentleman from Maryland on the other side of the aisle in his call, in his plea for bipartisanship, echoing our good friend and fellow newcomer from Nevada, [Mr. ENSIGN].

I would implore Members on both sides of the aisle, and indeed, people across this Nation, who have watched with interest, Mr. Speaker, as we have been involved, setting an historic pace for legislation, fulfilling a Contract With America, working to establish a new partnership together, knowing what is at stake, to truly understand the terms of this debate.

It has happened again, and doubtless will happen yet still, when those who fail to answer the challenge and call of my friend, the gentleman from Georgia [Mr. KINGSTON], proffer not new ideas, but, instead, inflammatory rhetoric, and inaccurate rhetoric.

For that purpose, once again tonight, I feel it is important as part of the truth squad to share with the American people, Mr. Speaker, the true proposals on spending for the School Lunch Program and for the program we called WIC, Women, Infants, and Children.

We start here in 1995 with an expenditure for WIC of almost \$3.5 billion. We start with a school lunch expenditure in 1995, for the fiscal year, of \$4.5 billion. Note in the succeeding years, the totals always go up. In 1996 for WIC, \$3.6 billion. For the School Lunch Program, it is \$4.7 billion. Look down to the year 2000. For the WIC Program, there is an increase of almost, or really in excess, of one-half billion dollars, up to \$4.2 billion, and an increase in the School Lunch Program, an increase in the School Lunch Program of \$1.5—pardon me, \$1.1 billion, all the way up to \$5.6 billion. Mr. Speaker, how on earth can that be characterized as a cut?

Now, the unkindest cut of all is the broad swath of truth that is shunted aside for purposes of political theatrics, for purposes of partisan advantage, for purposes of inflammatory rhetoric. The numbers speak for themselves.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, will the gentleman yield?

Mr. HAYWORTH. I am glad to yield to the gentleman from Georgia.

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, I am disturbed about that. Somebody is lying. Are you lying, or is the gen-

tleman from Georgia lying? If the taxpayers of America want to have those numbers, will you be willing to send them to them? Are you going to stand behind them?

Mr. HAYWORTH. Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to send these numbers. I believe everyone in the new majority is happy to share these numbers as part of the new proposals. Will there be different delivery systems? Sure.

Mr. KINGSTON. If the gentleman will yield, let's do this. Let's say if you are represented by a Democrat, write and get a copy of these. Send them to your representative and ask him why those numbers are not the truth.

If you are a Republican, we are going to send them to you. Let us just talk to the Democrat district tonight: Write and ask for those numbers.

Mr. HAYWORTH. Reclaiming my time from the gentleman, Mr. Speaker, I think he makes an excellent point. As we engage in this debate, in this new partnership, the American people really should write, write any of us, Members of the House, and ask for these numbers; specifically, the GOP proposed spending on WIC and School Lunch Programs.

We will be happy to supply those numbers, and challenge our friends on the other side to talk about this term "cuts," because again, there are no cuts. In the popular imagination, the only "cuts" are decreases in future increases in expenditures. Again, only in this culture, only in this curious combination and curious advantage-taking of political opportunism can that term even be bandied about.

I guarantee, I say to the gentleman from Georgia, and Mr. Speaker, the families gathered around the kitchen table making hard decisions about the family budget deal with real cuts, not phantom cuts and not theatrics.

I noted with interest my good friend, the gentleman from Missouri, who really started the special orders tonight, I think his information was inaccurate. This is the real story.

THE RESCISSION PACKAGE OF THE REPUBLICAN MAJORITY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 4, 1995, the gentleman from California [Mr. BECERRA] is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. BECERRA. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to come tonight and speak to my colleagues about something that will be coming before us next week. That is the Republican majority's rescission package, which, in essence, is the cuts that were made in the Committee on Appropriations in the last week or two to the tune of about \$18 billion, cuts that are going to be used, we first were told, for purposes of trying to finance the disaster relief efforts in places like California, as a result of the Northridge earthquake; in